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**CUBA**

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**TODAY**





Holy Trinity Cathedral, Havana, is finest non-Roman church building in Cuba

"THE WORK OF THE CHURCH IS ESPECIALLY important now as Cuba and the rest of the Latin American countries are becoming increasingly important as members of the family of nations." So writes the Bishop of Cuba, the Rt. Rev. A. H. Blankenship. He continues: "These nations have voice and vote in the United Nations, and they make up a third of the entire membership. Leaders in Latin America are aware of this new world role. It is clear that the Church must do everything possible to create a deep religious consciousness in regard to this responsibility. The destiny of the southern republics is great, and now is the time for the Church to help guide this destiny."

The Episcopal Church in Cuba is becoming more and more an indigenous organism; that is, a natural living thing affecting human life in Cuba. Although the Church's nearly fifty thou-

sand members are a relatively small proportion of Cuba's five million people, they are increasing in influence and in stability.

"We are now getting the second and third generation of Church people," the Bishop says. "This is beginning to make a marked difference as more people are taking their religious responsibilities more seriously. It also means that we can get more suitable candidates for the ministry. One phase of work that has become especially hopeful within the past few years is the increasing number of university students and graduates who are becoming members of the Church. These people are taking their places in the congregations."

#### **Some Unmet Opportunities**

THE beautiful island of Cuba is seven hundred miles long. In area it is a little smaller than Pennsylvania. Some eighty missions, spread out over the country, are cared for by twenty clergy, aided by twenty lay readers. All but two or three of the clergy are Cuban.

"We have opportunities we are unable to meet," says the Bishop. "No difficulty arises in establishing churches and schools where we have good men and even fair equipment. But we have no more clergy than we had thirty years ago, and we have three times the amount of work to do." The Episcopal Church in Cuba has been averaging more than one person confirmed, and more than seven baptized, every day for a year.

Many of those baptized are babies in country districts. This imposes a problem on the clergy for not nearly enough clergy are available either to teach the parents or to bring the children to confirmation as they grow up. Not enough teaching material exists in Spanish to help in this situation.

Invaluable aid to the Church comes from the boarding schools and parochial day schools. They too have plenty of problems and needs but their work is admirable. "Our teaching staff," writes the Bishop, "consists of a hundred Cuban teachers and a few American and British. They are giving loyal aid to the work of the Church."



Soroh Ashurst School, Guantánamo, rejoices in new building erected in 1947

Some of the largest schools are self-supporting and the others are nearly so. With a total of nearly two thousand students, the fifteen schools vary in size from a little one of about ten students up to Ashhurst, Guantánamo, with 516, and St. Paul's, Camagüey, with 407. Cathedral School, Havana, has 231; La Trinidad, Morón, 207. They are becoming recognized in their communities as institutions of the first order.

"The real tragedy of our work," he adds, "is the lack of adequate church buildings, and in eleven places rectories also are needed. We are renting nineteen houses or small rooms which are used for churches, very poor buildings in every way. They lack dignity and are in no way suitable for church services. It is difficult to hold the respect of the community with such build-

Baptism in rural mission where Church has great opportunity



Trinity School, Morón, one of Church's larger schools in Cuba, is recognized as a first class institution. Here some of school's two hundred students perform old Spanish dance.



St. John's Church, Vertientes, was built largely by Cubans





ings. Many of the smaller parochial schools, also, are in most inadequate rented buildings; they will never amount to much until they have better quarters."

The Episcopal Church has been in Cuba as an organized missionary district since 1904, although occasional services had been held long before that; in fact, the first Anglican services were held in 1762. In 1906, the Rt. Rev. Albion W. Knight, first bishop, reported ten clergy and 453 communicants.

### **Toward a Cuban Church**

THE goal is now, as it always has been, to build a Cuban Church with Cubans themselves taking the responsibility for leadership and maintenance. Self-support for the Church is a constant aim but it can hardly come in the immediate future, for reasons partly historic and partly economic. Many members have been received from the Roman Communion and had not been taught voluntary giving but rather to pay for services rendered; the Episcopal Church does not use this system and is trying to train people to give regular support. The United States, also, is known to be a rich country; the Cuban Church people have not all realized the necessity of local support.

Many of the Church people have only seasonal employment and can hardly maintain themselves. Cuba is still largely dependent upon sugar, although some progress has been made toward developing other crops and establishing new industries. Because of wage regulations



The goal in Cuba as everywhere in the Church's work is the development of a responsible national leadership. Here the Rt. Rev. A. H. Blankingship (center) has ordained another deacon (right) for Cuba's growing ministry.

and other social acts, the distribution of wealth is wider than it was a few years ago but it is still limited.

### **Thousands Await the Church**

THE Church's activity in Cuba is an appealing one at every level. It means that country clergy are seeking out families in rural districts and freely bringing to them the Church sacraments. It means that hundreds of children are given a chance at education in a country where, although education is compulsory by law, the schools are not yet adequate, nor do they provide the character-training which is an essential of true Christian education.

It means that college students and other young people may learn of Church teaching that can stimulate their minds and satisfy their deepest needs, leading more of them, it is hoped, to become strong Church leaders. It means that, as the number of well-trained clergy increases, missions can grow stronger and the Church's influence reach out more widely to the still unchurched thousands.

COVER: *Havana as seen from the Telephone Building. Photo by Gendreau.*



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